การวิเคราะห์สภาวะการหลายความหมายของคำไทย "เทา" ผ่านมุมมองเจ้าของภาษา
Scrutinizing Polysemous State of the Thai Word /thaw/ Through the Lens of Native Speakers

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บทคัดย่อ

คลังคำศัพท์ของคนไทยมีอัตราเพิ่มขึ้นและกระจายตัวไปในทุกแวดวง ผ่านกระบวนการต่าง ๆ อาทิ กระบวนการทางวิทยาหน่วยคำและกระบวนการขยายโครงข่ายความหมาย ในด้านอรรถศาสตร์นั้นสภาวะการหลายความหมายคือสภาวะที่คำ ๆ หนึ่งได้รับแนวคิดหรือนิยามใหม่เพิ่มขึ้นโดยยังคงไว้ทั้งรูปแบบและความหมายดั้งเดิม สภาวะการเช่นนี้ปรากฏได้ในนานาภาษา รวมถึงภาษาไทย หนึ่งในคำไทยที่พบสภาวะการหลายความหมายคือ "เทา" ซึ่งแสดงถึงลักษณะสีที่คล้ายกับขี้เถ้า ผู้วิจัยเล็งจึงทำการศึกษาสภาวะการหลายความหมายโดยวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลจากเฟซบุ๊ก อินสตาแกรม และเอ็กซ์ ผ่านการอธิบายด้วยกระบวนการสภาวะการหลายความหมายแบบมีหลักการ นอกจากนั้นผู้วิจัยได้สร้างแบบสำรวจความรับรู้ต่อสภาวะการหลายความหมายของคำว่า "เทา" มีผู้ร่วมตอบแบบสำรวจคือชาวไทยซึ่งเป็นเจ้าของภาษา จำนวน 53 คน ผลการศึกษาในขั้นแรกพบว่า "เทา" มีความหมายนอกจากความหมายต้นแบบอีก 2 ความหมาย ได้แก่ สภาวะความรู้สึกเชิงลบและสภาวะความไม่แน่นอนหรือความไม่สมบูรณ์แบบ ทั้งสองความหมายนี้แสดงให้เห็นว่า "เทา" ไม่เพียงแต่สื่อถึงสภาวะกึ่งกลางระหว่างสีเท่านั้น แต่ยังสะท้อนถึงภาวะเชิงลบต่าง ๆ อีกด้วย สำหรับผลการสำรวจความรับรู้ต่อสภาวะการหลายความหมายพบว่ากลุ่มตัวอย่างเห็นพ้องกันว่าความหมายต้นแบบของคำว่า "เทา" ในการใช้ภาษาไทยแบบร่วมสมัยคือลักษณะสีที่คล้ายกับขี้เถ้า

คำสำคัญ: สภาวะการหลายความหมาย, ความหมายต้นฉบับ, คำไทยที่มีหลายความหมาย

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Abstract

Lexicon size of Thai individuals keeps growing and proliferating in all domains by such means as morphological processes and semantic network expansion. In terms of semantics, polysemy is a property by which new concepts or definitions of a word are added with the same form and its core meaning is maintained. Polysemy is obvious in languages, including Thai. One among Thai polysemous words is a shade of ash-like color /thaw/ (gray in English). Based on authentic data collected from Facebook, Instagram, and X, this study noticed /thaw/'s variety of uses and thus sought to describe its polysemous state. The Principled Polysemy approach was employed to illustrate the word's semantic concepts, which stemmed from the very first definition. In addition, a survey questionnaire was conducted to retrieve the perception of 53 native Thai speakers towards the polysemous state of the word /thaw/. The primary results, on the one hand, indicated that /thaw/ has two further meanings: (1) a state of negative feeling and (2) a state of uncertainty and imperfection. Both concepts portray that /thaw/ not only holds neutrality of shades but also implies negative reflections. On the other hand, the most recognized and prototypical meaning of /thaw in contemporary Thai usage is "a shade of ash-like color", being confirmed by the majority of 53 samples that use and associate the word with its primary meaning.

Keywords: Polysemy, Prototypical Meaning, Thai Polysemous Word

Introduction

Rationale of the Study

In the world of language, a countless number of words are added to human lexicons. Individuals have reasons to come up with new words and bring them in use to satisfy their creativity (O'Grady, 2001). Word formation processes (e.g. compounding, blending, and conversion) have been employed repeatedly so that coinages, in other words, neologisms, can be created and delivered in time. Examples of neologisms are obvious during the pandemic of COVID-19, ranging from *hospitel*, *MIS-C*, *state quarantine*, *physical distancing*, to *vaxxer* (Akut, 2020). An increase of words, however, is not limited to creation of the news. Evans (2004) suggested that existing words themselves can be reshaped and expand their own concepts and meanings more broadly than what is called "prototypical meaning" (a primary definition of a word), and such concept is called polysemy (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Polysemy allows a word to possess more definitions than the prototypical one it has. To exemplify, a Thai word /sàt/ 'animal' at present furthers its definition to a sense of curse, referring to those who behave improperly or violate typical norms (Saejia, 2020).

Developed from Lakoff and Johnson (1980) *Fine-grained Polysemy*, the approach with which an expansion of word's meaning is involved, is Tyler and Evans (2003) *Principled Polysemy*. Tyler and Evans explain that Principled Polysemy is a linguistic approach

that addresses polysemy of words, and it elaborates on systematic networks of meanings stemming from one another. In terms of implementation and application, Principled Polysemy has taken part in analyzing semantic networks of English and Thai words, for instance, Treepraken (2021) study on cognitive linguistics and semantics, which featured the Thai word /narók/ and English word 'hell'; and Huang et al. (2022) study on extended meanings of an English word 'spring'.

Nonetheless, regardless of several studies on the polysemy of Thai words, the fact that Thai individuals usually create and normalize semantic concepts of words, especially by means of metonymy and metaphor (Wongthai, 2018), remains undisprovable. This study is based on an observation of how Thai word /thaw/ (gray in English) is distributed with distinction in usage. Consider the following.

(1) ผมซื้อเสื้อสีเทาตัวใหม่มานะ

phǒm sɯɯ sɯ̂a sǐi thaw tua màay maa náʔ 'I just bought a new gray shirt'.

(2) เทาไปหมดละวันนี้

thaw pay-mòt láʔ wan-níi 'It is blue all day'.

(3) อะไรเทา ๆ แบบนั้นไม่เอาด้วยหรอก

ʔàray thaw-thaw bæ-æp-nán mây-ʔaw dûay rɔ̀ɔk

'Never get me involved with such an uncertain thing'.

According to the above utterances, the word /thaw/ does not denote the same concept in each. While (1) appears to have /thaw/ represent a color, which is supposed to be the base concept of this word, (2) expresses

a feeling and (3) expresses something unclarified. This indicates the clear polysemous state of the word, which is presupposed by its variety of definitions. By analyzing such a common word as /thaw/, the study is expected to provide semantic patterns of the word in a more accurate and explainable manner. Besides, hearing from native speakers with regard to the word can provide real-world linguistic data. That is to say, it could contribute more or less to the community of linguistic research with an elaborated body of knowledge concerning how polysemy of Thai words is perceived through the lens of native speakers.

Research Objectives

1) To analyze the polysemous state of the word /thaw/

2) To examine perception of native Thai speakers towards the polysemous state of the word /thaw/

Research Questions

1. To what extent and how does the word /thaw/ obtain other definitions than its prototypical meaning?

2. What is the perception of native Thai speakers towards the polysemous state of the word /thaw/?

Scope of the Study

This study limited the territories of research to the polysemy of Thai word /thaw/, excluding other entities (e.g. metonymy, metaphor, and homonymy). Additionally, only discourses of Thai natives, not Thai-speaking

foreigners, were collected and analyzed based on Tyler and Evans' (2003) Principled Polysemy approach. As for perception towards the identified meanings, the survey questionnaire was distributed only to those who identified themselves as Thai native speakers.

Literature Review
Prototypical Meaning

Before an expansion of meaning, it is necessary that a word possesses its first, well-recognized meaning. Tyler and Evans (2003) proposed criteria on conceptualization of prototypical meaning (or so-called 'central meaning') as follows.

(1) Prototypical meaning is a common definition of a word mutually understood by the majority, and it must be the first suggested meaning, the origin of which can be traced.

(2) Prototypical meaning always represents other meanings newly suggested.

(3) Prototypical meaning holds a proven relation with another word, or can be in a contrastive set (e.g. *good* versus *bad*).

(4) Prototypical meaning provides clues for predictability of those newly suggested.

(5) Prototypical meaning is associated with perception and experience of individuals. Evans (2004) mentioned that the fifth criterion of prototypical meaning is later added following the needs for human involvement, providing an example of 'time', the prototypical meaning of which is referred by consensus to as 'duration'.

Polysemy

Polysemy is a language phenomenon which explains the multi-meaning state of words. Beretta et al. (2005) added that polysemy takes the greatest advantage possible of existing words and helps limit overabundance of word forms or miscellaneous items. Once a word expands its concepts or meanings to a wider extent, it offers various interpretations.

Likewise, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) reiterated that a relationship between meanings can be tightened once a word is interpreted by more than one meaning, despite the same morphological form. They further suggested that this concept is part of 'conceptual categories' as polysemy features both semantic and conceptual relationships of words.

Some linguists have drawn a comparison between polysemy and homonymy and hypothesized that they could be related. Notwithstanding, Fauconnier and Turner (2003) asserted that homonym merely refers to a set of words whose forms or phonetic properties are analogous, but meanings are not. Without a semantic relationship or network, the words are homonyms, but with such a relation or network, they are accounted for by polysemy.

Principled Polysemy

Proposed by Tyler and Evans (2003), Principled Polysemy is an approach to account for the polysemy of a word by providing an explanation of its meaning pattern in which

each newly suggested meaning stems from one another. The approach is of criteria that (1) apply contexts to handle similarity and ambiguity of a multi-meaning word; and (2) identify a prototypical meaning of a multi-meaning word. Thus, Tyler and Evans finalized the following three criteria.

(1) Meaning Criterion: A new meaning must be distinct and outstanding.

(2) Concept Elaboration Criterion: A new meaning must possess a different pattern from that of the previous meaning (e.g. different collocational patterns).

(3) Grammatical Criterion: A new meaning must be syntactically different from the previous meaning.

In order to verify that a new meaning does belong to a word, at least two out of three criteria must be satisfied. Nonetheless, the first (Meaning Criterion) is obligatory; in other words, a new meaning cannot be verified unless it qualifies Meaning Criterion.

Previous Related Studies

Polysemy of Thai words has been analyzed over time in different ways. Hiranras (2007) studied the word /ʔaw/ 'take' according to its semantic network using the Principled Polysemy as well as metonymy, metaphor, and cognitive linguistics theories. The study indicated various functions of the word (e.g. predicate, preposition, and pragmatic marker).

A study by Rattanapanusorn et al. (2016) analyzed polysemy of the Thai word /hěn/ and found that the word held the sense of not only visual perception but also cognitive perception, which was mostly accounted for by metonymy. The results of this study also resembled those of Lueangrungudom (2023), which analyzed the semantic extension of the Thai words "nàk" and "baw" to draw a comparison. Having employed the Principled Polysemy approach, metaphor, and metonymy, the study found that this pair of antonymous words shared similar extensive senses of meaning, mostly driven by metonymy and metaphor. Lengwiriyakul (2023), placing a different emphasis, analyzed the polysemous state of the Thai word /tææ/ in the old Thai contexts. Based on the Principled Polysemy, Lengwiriyakul reported that the word in the past had more senses of meaning than today. This study is significant proof that polysemy has been playing a role in the Thai language systems for a long time, even until the era of contemporary Thai.

Another study by Iamsa-ard (2024) employed the componential analysis to investigate a Thai word /sòt/ regarding its positions and functions, semantics, and word formation dynamics. It was revealed that the word /sòt/ could serve both as a nominal modifier and an intransitive verb which can be combined with other lexical units to form new words.

According to the review of literature, it is proven that there is room for research on the polysemy of Thai words in the linguistic community. Despite the previous studies having analyzed different linguistic properties of polysemous words, the present study sought to delve deeper into polysemy by

scrutinizing the word /thaw' through the textual analysis and conducting a survey questionnaire to unveil how it is used and perceived by native Thai speakers.

Research Methods

Sampling and Data Collection
Phase 1

In response to Research Question 1, the researchers collected data from public posts and reel (short video) captions on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram, which yielded various utterances. The data comprised 414 social media posts: 196 posts from Facebook, 137 from X, and 81 from Instagram, on which the word /thaw/ was included. The collected data was dated between January 1st, 2024 and August 31st, 2024, which was believed to represent the up-to-datedness of the data.

Phase 2

In response to Research Question 2, an online survey questionnaire was created in order to gain perception of Thai native speakers towards the polysemous state of /thaw/. Developed by the researchers, the questionnaire content was based on the results of the prior analysis and was validated by three native Thai lecturers, all of whom hold a Ph.D. with experience in research conduct. To gather data, the researchers employed a convenience sampling method by posting the survey link with a scannable QR code on Instagram. This platform was selected because it provided direct access to followers who were

native Thai speakers, thereby increasing the likelihood of participation, with 53 responses from Instagram followers of one researcher. Formatted as a Google form, the survey questionnaire contained six questions. The first two dichotomous questions were to confirm whether the samples were native speakers of the Thai language and were familiar with the word /thaw/ or not. Those answering "No" to either of these questions were requested to skip the following questions and leave the survey. The other four questions were subsequently asked to examine the samples' perception. This survey questionnaire was written in Thai to ensure the respondents' understanding of the questions.

Data Analysis

Analysis of Grammatical Categories

After the data were collected, the researchers categorized grammatical functions of the word /thaw/ using the categories of Thai lexical words by Iwasaki and Ingkapirom (2005): noun, verb, adjective, and adverb.

(1a) คนอื่นมาสีสดใสใจแซ่บ อิชั้นมาสีเทาคนเดียวเลยจ้ะ

khon ʔɯɯn maa sǐi sòt-saǐy cay-sæ̂æp ʔi-chán maa sǐi thaw khon-diaw lǝǝy câʔ

'While they are all in a very colorful outfit, I'm the only one in a gray suit'.

(2a) เทาเบอร์นี้ยังกล้าออกจากบ้านอีกหรอค้า

thaw bǝǝ níi ya klâa ʔɔɔk càak bâan

ʔìik rɔ̌ɔ kháa

'How dare you walk out the door with your face not even matching your neck?'.

(3a) ถนัดเหลือเกินนะไอ้งานเทา ๆ เนี่ย
tha-nàt lɨ̌a-kɘ̌ɘn ná ʔâỳ -aan thaw-thaw nîa

'You are kind of good at doing such an uncertain job'.

Given the examples, the word /thaw/ in (1a) was categorized as an adjective according to its appearance following the head noun /sǐi/ (color) to form a noun phrase. For /thaw/ in (2a) and (3a), it was also categorized as an adjective. /thaw/ in (2a) serves as an adjective predicate in such subjectless sentence, modified by an adverb phrase /bɘ̌ɘ níi/ (so), while /thaw/ in (3a) serves as a post-nominal modifier for the head noun /ŋaan/, like that in (1a). These examples represent the repeated distribution of /thaw/ and provide a conclusion that the word /thaw/ functions as a nominal modifier (adjective).

Analysis of Prototypical Meaning

Following the grammatical categorization, the researchers identified the prototypical meaning of the word /thaw/. Given examples (1a), (2a), and (3a), the researchers considered semantic contexts and hypothesized that /thaw/ in (1) could provide a straightforward definition with no need for additional clues; despite the omission of the preceding word /sǐi/ (color), it could stand alone and remain comprehensible. That is to say, it describes merely a shade of color. Unlike (1a), /thaw/ in (2a) and (3a) require further clues to predict their connotations.

To confirm the hypothesis, the researchers employed the criteria of prototypical meaning of Tyler and Evans (2003).

(1) /thaw/ as "a shade of ash-like color" is a common definition mutually understood by the majority. People's first perception usually refers /thaw/ to a shade of color, and its original definition is officially suggested by the Royal Society of Thailand.

(2) /thaw/ could imply the emergence of new meanings. As the word holds a color shade that represents neither total blackness nor absolute whiteness, it allows for the other two definitions than the primary one, as illustrated in (2a) and (3a).

(3) /thaw/ possesses a proven relationship with the word /khǎaw/ 'white' and /dam/ 'black' in the way that it is in the middle between total blackness and absolute whiteness. However, it is noteworthy that /thaw/ has no contrastive pair.

(4) /thaw/ is a shade of color in the middle of total black and absolute white, which is likely to be representative of mixing. Therefore, it can provide a clue for new meanings, making them predictable.

(5) Individuals perceive that /thaw/ is at first associated with color, and it is also descriptive of a state of blue feeling or depression, and a state of uncertainty, as well as insecurity.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the prototypical meaning of /thaw/ is "a shade of ash-like color".

Analysis of Polysemy

After identifying the prototypical meaning, the researchers made an analysis of the polysemy of /thaw/ using the Principled Polysemy approach of Tyler and Evans (2003). The adopted criteria include Meaning Criterion, Concept Elaboration Criterion, and Gramma tical Criterion. From the analysis, two new meanings were identified, as described and explained in the part of results.

Examination of Thai Native Speakers' Perception

Following the implementation of the Principled Polysemy approach, the researchers conducted a survey questionnaire among 53 native Thai speakers in order to support the predominance of the prototypical meaning of the Thai word /thaw/, The goal was to examine contextual usage of the word and perception of native speakers towards its most common and prototypical meaning.

Results

Analysis of the Polysemous State of the Word /thaw/

As for Research Question 1: *To what extent and how does the word /thaw/ obtain other definitions than its prototypical meaning?*, two new meanings of the word /thaw/ were identified (1) /thaw/ that describes a state of negative feeling and (2) /thaw/ that describes a state of uncertainty and imperfection.
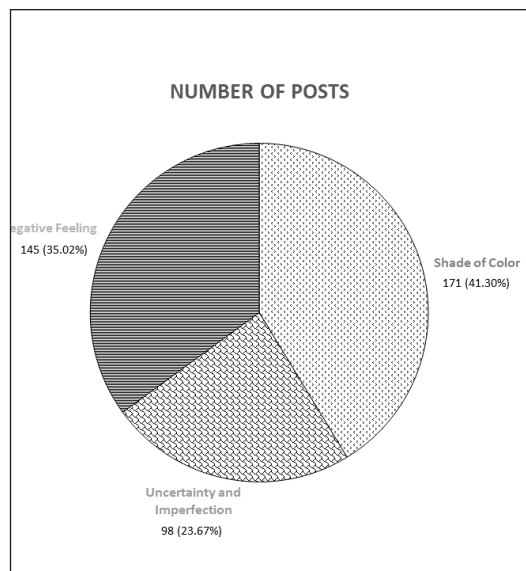

Figure 1: Number of Posts on which /thaw/ Differs in Meanings

According to Figure 1, the number of posts on which /thaw/ was used that represent /thaw/ as a shade of color is significantly the greatest (171 posts) among 414 posts with the three identified meanings, followed by /thaw/ describing a state of negative feeling (145 posts) and /thaw/ describing a state of uncer tainty and imperfection (98 posts). Examples are provided as follows.

1) /thaw/ describing a state of nega tive feeling

As discussed above /thaw/ is like a mix of 'black and white'. In Thai, /thaw/ further represents the word /mòn/ 'to be unpleasant, down', which usually possesses a negative semantic prosody. Hence, /thaw/'s expression of a state of negative feeling does differ from the prototypical meaning and its

counterpart ➖ which expresses uncertainty and imperfection. It is no longer in the middle of any state, but clearly refers to a 'negative' one. Once used, it is often referred to as 'depression'.

(1b) เห็นน้องหมาจมน้ำต่อหน้าต่อตา รู้สึกหม่น ๆ เทา ๆ ทั้งวันเลยวันนี้ สงสารน้อง

hěn nɔ́ɔŋ mǎa com-náam tɔ̀ɔ-naâ-tɔ̀ɔ-taa rúu-sʉ̀k mòn mòn thaw thaw tháŋ wan ləəy wan-níi sǒŋ-sǎan nɔ́ŋ

'Seeing a dog drown right before my eyes, I am down all day today. Poor the puppy'.

(2b) ไม่ไหวแล้ว เป็นความรู้สึกเทา ๆ ไปหมดเลย

mây-wǎy lǽæw pen khwaam rúu-sʉ̀k thaw-thaw pay-mòt-ləəy

'I cannot bear this any longer. It is all a blue feeling'.

(3b) โลกกลายเป็นสีเทาไปเลยตั้งแต่เลิกกัน คิดถึงอะเธอ

loôk klaay pen sǐi thaw pay ləəy taŋ tǽæ lə̂ək kan khít thʉ̆ŋ ʔà thəə

'The world turned gray right after we broke up. I miss you'.

Despite the same form, /thaw/ in each example does not denote 'a color shade' but 'a feeling'. As in (1b) and (2b), /thaw/ co-occurs with the linking verb /rúu-sʉ̀k/ (to feel) and noun /khwaam rúu-sʉ̀k/ (feeling) respectively, both of which conceptualize an emotional state (feeling). For (3b), although /thaw/ does not co-occur with any feeling-related word, the context allows for a prediction; /taŋ tǽæ lə̂ək kan/ (right after we broke up) and /khít thʉ̆ŋ ʔà thəə/ (I miss you) describe an undesirable emotion.

Table 1 evidences that /thaw/ is outstanding in describing a state of negative feeling. Its new meaning properly satisfies two out of the three criteria, which is adequate for conforming to the Principled Polysemy by Tyler and Evans (2003).

Table 1: Criterion-applied Explanation of /thaw/ for a State of Negative Feeling

Criterion	Explanation	Result
Meaning Criterion	While the prototypical meaning denotes /thaw/ as "a shade of color between black and white", it is frequently used in reference to a 'negative feeling', not in between positive and negative.	Passed
Concept Elaboration Criterion	The word appears only in a negative semantic prosody to express undesirable states, unlike its prototypical one, which can appear in either prosody in color-related contexts.	Passed
Grammatical Criterion	Irrespective of polysemy, the word is a post-nominal modifier (adjective).	Failed

2) /thaw/ describing a state of uncertainty and imperfection

Besides a shade of color and a state of negative feeling, /thaw/ holds an extensive meaning that expresses a state of uncertainty and imperfection, in the middle of 'good' and 'bad'. This is relatively close in relation to the prototypical meaning, where /thaw/ is between 'black' and 'white'. See the following examples.

(1c) เลิกโลกสวยเหอะ คนเรามันก็เทา ๆ กันทั้งนั้นแหละ

lə̂ək loôk-suǎy hə̀ʔ khon raw man kə̂ thaw-thaw kan tháŋ-nán læ̀ʔ

'Stop being overoptimistic. You know, we all are not that meritful'.

(2c) คุณไม่ละอายใจกันบ้างหรือ ไอ้ธุรกิจสีเทาแบบนั้นน่ะ

khun mây lá-ʔaay-cay kan baâŋ rɯ̌ɯ ʔây thú-rá-kìt sǐi thaw bæ̀æp-nán nàʔ

'Do you not feel ashamed running your gray business?'

(3c) มาใส่ใจจะอะไรคนเทา ๆ อย่างกูล่ะ

kuu man khon thaw thaw

'Why would you care about an imperfect brat like me?'

Given the examples, it is inferable from each context that /thaw/ depicts a state of uncertainty and imperfection. As in (1c), the sentence facilitates that /thaw/ refers to imperfection of human beings, which is quite similar to (3c) describing him/herself (the subject) in disappointment. Meanwhile, /thaw/ in (2c) co-occurs with the word /thú-rá-kìt/ 'business/, generating a noun phrase /thú-rá-kìt-sǐi-thaw/. As in Thai laws, /thú-rá-kìt-sǐi-thaw/ is a kind of business that takes advantage of some legal gap but is still legitimate to operate. Thus, /thaw/ in the mentioned context reasonably illustrates 'uncertainty' (of businesses).

Based on the criteria of Principled Polysemy by Tyler and Evans (2003), the availability of /thaw/ that describes a state of uncertainty and imperfection is supported by an explanation in Table 2.

Table 2: Criterion-applied Explanation of /thaw/ for a State of Uncertainty and Imperfection

Criterion	Explanation	Result
Meaning Criterion	Despite a similar pattern of relationship (black-white; good-bad), /thaw/ grabs a new meaning whose further concept is clear and comprehensible in contexts different from those of the prototypical one.	Passed
Concept Elaboration Criterion	The word usually co-occurs with certain noun collocates (e.g. /khon/, /thú-rá-kìt/, and the likes), which prevents it from being perceived as a color shade.	Passed
Grammatical Criterion	/thaw/ is a post-nominal modifier (adjective) in use.	Failed

Perception of Native Speakers towards the Polysemous State of the Word /thaw/

As for Research Question 2: *What is the perception of native Thai speakers towards the polysemous state of the word /thaw/?*, the contextual usage of the word and perception of the 53 native Thai speakers towards its most common and prototypical meaning are reported as follows (see Figure 2).
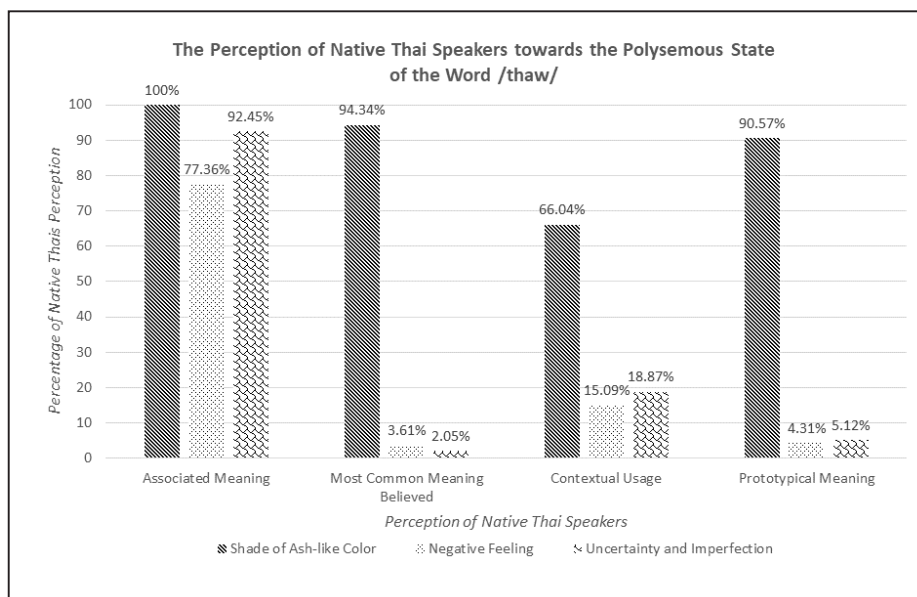

Figure 2: Perception of Native Thai Speakers

1)   When asked to select the meanings they associate with /thaw/, 53 samples (100%) identified "a shade of ash-like color", followed by 49 samples (92.45%) who selected "a state of uncertainty and imperfection", and 41 samples (77.36%) who selected "a state of negative feeling".

2)   When asked which meaning they believed was most common in everyday conversation, *a shade of ash-like color* was overwhelmingly selected by 50 samples (94.34%), reinforcing its position as the prototypical meaning. This is consistent with prior analysis suggesting that the color sense of /thaw/ is the most typical usage.

3)   The samples were also asked in which contexts they most commonly used /thaw/. The most frequent response by 35 samples (66.04%) was "when describing an object's color", followed by 10 samples (18.87%) "when talking about uncertainty or imperfection" and eight samples (15.09%) "when describing a negative feeling".

4)   When asked which meaning of /thaw/ was considered prototypical, the majority (48 samples or 90.57%) selected *a shade of ash-like color* as the most prototypical or primary meaning. This data aligns with the

prior analysis result that the color-related meaning is the dominant interpretation of /thaw/ in Thai.

Conclusion and Discussion

Using the Principled Polysemy approach, the research question was answered. It can be concluded that the word /thaw/ possesses two extensive meanings different from "a shade of ash-like color". The first one is conceptualized as "a state of uncertainty and imperfection", which relies partially on being at the middle of two contrastive tones. While the prototypical meaning is positioned between 'black' and 'white', the new one provides a depiction of "neither good nor bad", merely "uncertain". The other meaning, on the contrary, gives a completely different sense. It is no longer in between two contrastive concepts but describes "a state of 'negative' feeling", which is frequently referred to as depression.

In comparison with previous studies such as those by Lueangrungudom (2023) and Iamsa-ard (2024), the present study's results reiterate the fact that Thai words are with their polysemous states as one of the ways to expand their meanings further than the prototypical. Given this, the researchers sophisticated the analysis by assessing the perception of native speakers to provide an insight into how the word /thaw/ and its multiple meanings were recognized at the individual level.

As for perception of native speakers, the survey results yielded a conclusion that "a shade of ash-like color" was the most recognized and prototypical meaning of /thaw/. The strong majority of samples both use and associate the word with this primary meaning, confirming its dominance in contemporary Thai language usage. These findings substantiate the lexical analysis and highlight the importance of speaker perception in identifying a word's prototypical meaning.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that /thaw/ itself can be of another less-frequent definition. The Royal Thai Society suggests that /thaw/ can be defined as an act of moving forward. In search of common uses on social media platforms, nevertheless, the researchers nevertheless did not detect the use of this definition. The researchers hence excluded that definition to avoid the inadequacy of analyzable data.

Recommendation for Further Studies Despite the two-fold analysis, the present study focused primarily on the use of the word /thaw/ through the perception of only native Thai speakers. Further studies may conduct an analysis on perception of Thai-speaking foreigners towards their polysemy.

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